



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until Monday, 22 October 2018, 00:01 (Vienna – CEST)

The lost decade in the global war on drugs

New report shows 10-year United Nations drug strategy set to conclude in colossal failure

Vienna, 22 October 2018 – A report released today by the [International Drug Policy Consortium](#) (IDPC) has exposed the United Nations 10-year global strategy aimed to eradicate the illegal drug market by 2019 as a spectacular failure of policy and urged a re-think of its new strategy for the next decade.

The report, *Taking stock: A decade of drug policy – A civil society shadow report* is a response by IDPC and its 174 NGO network to the failure by governments and the United Nations Office of Drug and Crime to comprehensively evaluate the 10-year plan based on a discredited ‘war on drugs’ approach that continues to generate a catastrophic impact on health, human rights, security and development, while not even remotely reducing the global supply of illegal drugs.

Using wide-ranging data from UN, government, academic and civil society sources, the report from the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) shows that this UN goal has been spectacularly missed.

Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and a member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, states in the report: *"What we learn from the shadow report is compelling. Since governments started collecting data on drugs in the 1990s, the cultivation, consumption and illegal trafficking of drugs have reached record levels. Moreover, current drug policies are a serious obstacle to other social and economic objectives... and the "war on drugs" has resulted in millions of people murdered, disappeared, or internally displaced."*

Gino Vumbaca, President of Harm Reduction Australia, added: *"It is time for Australia to rethink its own recent approach to drug policy and adopt a position that is far more supportive of treatment and harm reduction. A war on drugs is simply a war on own family and friends. The fact that almost 90% of all drug arrests in Australia are for consumers (use and possession) exposes the lie behind the regular statements from government officials that they are not trying to arrest their way out of this issue. Australia once led the world on evidence informed drug policy, sadly we are now falling further and further behind as ideology becomes our dominant rationale for drug policy. The inability of the Federal Government to even allow a pilot of pill testing services, one which was already approved by the ACT Government after a rigorous process of review, sadly shows where evidence sits in the decision making process today."*

Key data from the Civil Society Shadow Report:

- A 145% increase in drug-related deaths over the last decade, totalling a harrowing 450,000 deaths per year in 2015.
- At least 3,940 people executed for a drug offence over the last decade, with 33 jurisdictions retaining the death penalty for drug offences in violation of international standards.
- Around 27,000 extrajudicial killings in drug crackdowns in the Philippines.

- More than 71,000 overdose deaths in the United States in 2017 alone.
- A global pain epidemic, resulting from restrictions in access to controlled medicines, which have left 75% of the world's population without proper access to pain relief.
- Mass incarceration fuelled by the criminalisation of people who use drugs – with 1 in 5 prisoners incarcerated for drug offences, mostly for possession for personal use.

Key Australian Data:

- Over 113,000 people were arrested for consuming drugs in Australia in the last 12 months – this equates to a person in Australia in possession of drugs for personal use being arrested every 4.5 minutes.
- Cannabis accounts for more than half the people arrested for personal use or possession of a drug
- It is estimated that there are now over 2,000 drug related deaths in Australia each year

Key links and information:

- The **International Drug Policy Consortium** is a global network of 174 NGOs that come together to promote an objective and open debate on national and international drug policies, and supports evidence-based policies that are effective at reducing harms. More information: www.idpc.net.
- 'Taking stock: A decade of drug policy – A civil society shadow report' is available on request and will be published here on 22 October: <https://idpc.net/publications/2018/10/taking-stock-a-decade-of-drug-policy-a-civil-society-shadow-report>. Embargoed copies of the report are available on request (jfernandez@idpc.net).
- Details about the **launch of the report** at the UN are available here: <https://idpc.net/events/2018/10/a-10-year-review-of-successes-and-failures-of-global-drug-control-a-civil-society-shadow-report>.
- **2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action:** global drug strategy adopted at the United Nations in Vienna which set out to eradicate or significantly reduce the illegal drug market by 2019. The full text is available here: http://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_52/Political-Declaration2009_V0984963_E.pdf.
- The **2019 UN Ministerial Segment** will take place at the UN headquarters in Vienna on 14-15 March 2019. The objective is to take stock of progress made since 2009, and critically to delineate a framework for global drug control for the coming decade. More information is available here: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/2019/2019-high-level-ministerial-segment.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

<p>Australian enquiries:</p> <p>Gino Vumbaca President Harm Reduction Australia 0408-244-552 gino@3vc.com.au</p>	<p>Global enquiries:</p> <p>Juan Fernandez Ochoa Communications Officer International Drug Policy Consortium +44 (0) 7 55 12 12 183 (Mobile) +44 (0) 2 07 32 42 973 (Landline) jfernandez@idpc.net</p>
--	--

###



Australia's first national harm reduction organisation for individuals committed to reducing the health, social and economic harms potentially associated with drug use